V.—QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

STARRED QUESTIONS

Criminal Settlement

Religious worship in the criminal settlement at Sitanagaram.

*489 *Q*.—Mr. G. R. PREMAYYA: Will the hon. the Home Member be pleased to state—

(*a*) whether it is a fact that Christians in the criminal settlement at Sitanagaram were forbidden to worship in the church built for the purpose by the Salvation Army Mission which was till recently in charge of the settlement;

(*b*) whether it is a fact that specific orders were issued by the manager to the Christian inmates of the settlement prohibiting them from discoursing on religion; and

(*c*) whether the manager was acting on any instructions from the Government?

A.—(*a*) No. But meetings of all kinds were forbidden within this settlement as experience showed that whatever might be the ostensible objects of meetings they were liable to be misused for the purpose of arranging for the settlers to abscond and commit crime.

(*b*) No.

(*c*) No. The manager was acting under instructions from the Commissioner of Labour and the Inspector-General of Police when prohibiting meetings.

Mr. G. R. PREMAYYA:—"With reference to the answer to clause (*a*) which says that all kinds of meetings were forbidden, may I know whether meetings for religious worship also were forbidden?"

The hon. Sir MAHOMED USMAN:—"No."

Mr. DANIEL THOMAS:—"May I know whether any actual cases of misuse of meetings were brought to light?"

The hon. Sir MAHOMED USMAN:—"I think so. The Commissioner of Labour knows it."

Mr. DANIEL THOMAS:—"Is this a temporary order, or is this going to be in force for all time?"

The hon. Sir MAHOMED USMAN:—"It is in force at present."

Mr. DANIEL THOMAS:—"In the absence of actual cases of misuse of meetings, may I know whether the Government will be pleased to reconsider the matter and permit religious meetings?"

The hon. Sir MAHOMED USMAN:—"I shall further reconsider the matter. I cannot promise anything."

Mr. A. RANGANATHA MUDALIYAR:—"Are there any non-Christians in this settlement and has there been any objection to non-Christians attending the services in the church?"

The hon. Sir MAHOMED USMAN:—"I do not think there is any objection to non-Christians attending the church, but I do not think they generally attend it."

Mr. G. R. Premayya:—"With reference to the answer to clause (c), may I ask whether the Government will be pleased to place the instructions on the table of the House?"

The hon. Sir Mahomed Usman:—"I do not think it is necessary."

Law and Order (General)

Alleged circular of the Government prohibiting the participation of Government servants in functions got up in connexion with Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Madras.

* 490 *Q.*—Mr. U. C. Subrahmanya Bhatt: Will the hon. the Home Member be pleased to state whether it is a fact that the Government have issued circulars to all Government servants to the effect that they should not take part in any function or demonstration or should not in any way help the same in connexion with the visit of Mahatma Gandhi to Madras?

A.—The Government have issued a circular to the effect that while Government servants should put no obstacles in the way of Mr. Gandhi's tour and should do nothing to interfere with non-officials who wish to welcome Mr. Gandhi or show sympathy for the cause of Harijan uplift, their participation in meetings and demonstrations in connexion with his visit is improper.

Mr. U. C. Subrahmanya Bhatt:—"Will the hon. the Home Member be pleased to get a copy of the circular and place it on the table of the House?"

The hon. Sir Mahomed Usman:—"I do not think it is necessary. It is a confidential document."

Mr. U. C. Subrahmanya Bhatt:—"May I know in what way it is improper for Government officials to attend meetings in connexion with Harijan uplift?"

The hon. Sir Mahomed Usman:—"The question of Harijan uplift is associated with the question of temple entry, which is a very controversial question. Public servants, especially those belonging to the Judicial and Police Departments, may be called upon to adjudicate in the matter at any moment and it is better for them to take a neutral attitude."

Mr. V. M. Ramaswami Mudaliyar:—"May I know whether the prohibition applies even with regard to canvassing opinion for temple entry?"

The hon. Sir Mahomed Usman:—"I think the answer is very clear. It is here stated that 'participation in meetings and demonstrations in connexion with his visit is improper.' I do not wish to say anything further."

Mr. M. A. Manikkavelu Nayakar:—"May I know whether Government servants are prohibited also from contributing to the Harijan fund?"